



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: Feb. 18, 2003 (03-10)

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Governor Locke declares February 20 "Potato Lovers' Day"

OLYMPIA – Gov. Gary Locke has proclaimed Thursday, Feb. 20 "Potato Lovers' Day" in Washington. The Washington State Potato Commission will celebrate Potato Lovers' Day by hosting two free potato bars in the lobbies of the John L. O'Brien and John A. Cherberg buildings. Washington grown potatoes will be served to legislators, staff and visitors between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

"This is a popular event on the Capitol Campus even in this year of high pressure and dislocated offices," said Pat Boss, executive director of the Potato Commission. "Legislators and staff look forward to their annual baked potato and the information we distribute."

Potatoes are one of the state's most valuable commodities, pumping around \$3 billion into the economy each year in jobs and product sales. Washington growers can produce up to 56,000 pounds of potatoes per acre, which is a higher yield per acre than growers achieve anywhere the world. Potatoes are the state's second largest crop after apples. Last year, Washington growers produced more than 4.8 million tons of potatoes on 175,000 acres.

About 90 percent of all potatoes grown in Washington are marketed out of state. A significant portion of the harvest goes to Asia and Latin America through the ports of Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland. Washington accounts for about one-third of all potatoes exported from the U.S., most of them processed into frozen french fries or dehydrated products.

The Washington State Potato Commission represents the state's approximately 300 potato growers. February is National Potato Month. For more information about Washington potatoes, visit the commission's Web site at <http://www.potatoes.com>.

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Note to editors: Text of the governor's proclamation is available on the WSDA Web site at <http://agr.wa.gov/News/2003/Attachments/PotatoLoversMonthProclamation2003.pdf>.